

MINUTES
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING OF THE VALDOSTA CITY COUNCIL
6:15 P.M., WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

OPENING CEREMONIES

Mayor Scott James Matheson called the Regular Meeting of the Valdosta City Council to order at 6:15 p.m. Council members present were: Thomas McIntyre, Eric Howard, Sandra Tooley, Tim Carroll, Nick Harden, and Vivian Miller-Cody. Councilman Andy Gibbs was absent. The invocation was given by Councilman Carroll, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Regular Meeting held on September 19, 2024 were approved by unanimous consent (6-0) of the Council.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Consideration of Ordinances pertaining to six Greater Lowndes Planning Commission (GLPC) Case Requests advertised for the September 30, 2024 GLPC Public Hearing which was cancelled. These Case Requests are to be tabled and re-advertised for the November 7, 2024 Regular Council Meeting.

Matt Martin, Planning Director, stated that the Greater Lowndes Planning Commission (GLPC) Meeting scheduled for Monday, September 30, 2024 was cancelled due to on-going recovery activities relating to Hurricane Helene. The following six (6) GLPC Agenda Items scheduled for Public Hearing by the GLPC on September 30th, with Public Hearing and action by the Valdosta City Council on October 10, 2024, will now be re-advertised for Public Hearing with the GLPC on October 28, 2024, with Public Hearing and final action by the Valdosta City Council on November 7, 2024: (1) File No. CU-2024-06, request by JB2 Partners LLC, (2) File No. VA-2024-14, request by Julian & Norma Cloud, (3) File No. VA-2024-15, request by Four Bee Development LLC, (4) File No. VA-2024-16, request by Marian Leonard, (5) File No. VA-2024-17, request by Park Hawthorne Development LLC, and (6) File No. VA-2024-18, request by James Warren. Ordinances and other information will be included in the City Council Agenda Packet for November 7, 2024. Matt Martin, Planning Director, recommended that Council approve a request to table the six items to the November 7, 2024 Council Meeting and that way there will be an ending on the advertisement for last month and a new advertisement for this month. There will also be one new case at the November 7, 2024 Council Meeting.

A MOTION by Councilman Harden, seconded by Councilman Howard, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to table the six Greater Lowndes Planning Commission (GLPC) Case Requests that were advertised for the September 30, 2024 GLPC Public Hearing which was cancelled and then re-advertise for the November 7, 2024 Regular Council Meeting.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

ORDINANCE NO. 2024-21, AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH THE 2024 TAX MILLAGE RATE FOR THE CITY OF VALDOSTA

Consideration of an Ordinance to establish the 2024 Tax Millage Rate for the City of Valdosta.

Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, stated that this is a request to establish the 2024 calendar year and the 2025 Fiscal Year Tax Millage Rate at 6.506 mills which will adequately fund the Budget at an estimated collection rate of 96.5%. This is a reduction from the prior year Millage Rate but because it is an increase above the rollback rate computed by the State it is considered a tax increase. Chuck Dinkins, Finance Director, recommended that Council approve the Ordinance to adopt the new Tax Millage Rate of 6.506 mills, 5 additional mills for property located in the Central Valdosta Development area, and 14.068 mills set by the Valdosta City School System.

A **MOTION** was made by Councilman Howard to adopt the rollback rate of 6.506 mills. Councilwoman Tooley seconded the motion. Councilman Carroll inquired as to whether they need to include in the motion that we are adopting the 5 additional mills for property located in the Central Valdosta Development area, and 14.068 mills set by the Valdosta City School System. Councilman Howard and Councilwoman Tooley were both in agreement to include that in the motion. The motion was unanimously adopted (6-0) to enact Ordinance No. 2024-21, the complete text of which will be found in Ordinance Book XIV.

LOCAL FUNDING AND REQUESTS

Consideration of a request to purchase one Sutphen Demonstration Fire Engine for the City of Valdosta Fire Department.

Fire Chief Brian Boutwell stated that Sutphen Demonstration Fire Engine is a stock truck that is built to take to shows and show other Fire Departments so they are more readily available. In 2022, Council approved the purchase of two Fire Apparatus Engines and we are locked into the 2022 price. We were expecting to pay \$1.6 million for the arrival of two Fire Engines in the early calendar year of 2025; however, due to manufacturing setbacks, the 2022 orders will not be delivered until calendar 2026 which poses an issue. We are short on trucks and we have to have one in the first part of 2025. He called an ISO Representative and discussed several things to make sure the City is prepared for the next evaluation. He also spoke with the Manufacturer that has the 2022 price and they have a stock truck. It is now at Williams Fire in Alabama and they are waiting on us to commit to the purchase. The cost of this truck is \$962,037.40. This Pumper is currently being held for the City of Valdosta pending Council approval. The purchase can be made through Sourcewell Contract 022818-SUT. This custom Pumper is manufactured by Sutphen which is our current front-line fleet. The other two trucks that are on order and that have been delayed until 2026 and they have agreed on delivering one in April of 2026 and we have asked the to hold the other one until July of 2026. Chief Brian Boutwell recommended that Council approve the purchase of one Sutphen Demonstration Fire Engine through the Sourcewell Contract in the amount of \$962,037.40 for the City of Valdosta Fire Department for delivery in the first part of 2025. We are still locked in at the 2022 prices of \$813,000 for the two other Engines.

Councilman Harden inquired as to whether the purchase of the Fire Engines would be separated into two different Fiscal Years. Chief Boutwell stated that was correct. The original purchase of \$813,149 each was the 2022 price. To help offset the cost, they are going to split that in two Fiscal Years.

Councilman McIntyre inquired as to whether the one at Williams Fire Apparatus was new. Chief Boutwell stated that was correct. This Engine was brand new from Sutphen and Williams Fire Apparatus took possession of it and they are holding it for us. The two that we ordered custom-built, we line-itemed every bolt, every light, and everything to meet our specifications. Williams Fire found a stock truck and said this truck is the closest one that we have to meeting your exact specifications. We have to make sure we have enough acceleration for the overpasses and there are certain things that we require for our needs in the City of Valdosta. This truck still meets our needs and we have ordered one of these before. This truck is white over red so the cab is white and the rest of the truck is red. Our trucks are mainly black over red now and when we commit to the purchase they will start making small adjustments in order to customize it for us.

A **MOTION** was made by Councilwoman Miller-Cody to approve the purchase of one Sutphen Demonstration Fire Engine through the Sourcewell Contract in the amount of \$962,037.40 for the City of Valdosta Fire Department. Councilman Harden seconded the motion. The motion was adopted (5-1) to with Councilwoman Tooley voting in opposition.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

A citizen came forward to thank Councilman Harden, Councilwoman Tooley, and Councilman McIntyre for helping with Hurricane Helene.

Richard Hardy, City Manager, stated that he wanted to thank everyone for all of their hard work and their efforts to prepare for Hurricane Helene. Staff did an amazing job and everyone on the Leadership Team stepped up and performed throughout the storm taking care of our community.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Matheson stated that Richard Hardy, City Manager, and Catherine Ammons, Assistant City Manager, came and picked him up after Hurricane Helene and one of their first survey rides, they came upon three men with chainsaws cutting trees off of Inner Perimeter Road. They were Police Officers and had just finished working a 12-hour shift. It was those kinds of stories that were non-stop throughout our City. They did an awesome job. He thanked them for their service to our City.

Councilman McIntyre stated that when Hurricane Idalia came through, it showed up our strengths and weaknesses and it was a precursor for Hurricane Helene. We stepped up to the plate and everyone did their job. He did not see anyone who skipped a bit. We had the President, State Senators, Mayor, Council, City Manager, Assistant City Manager, Department Heads, and 600 plus employees who were helping us. It was quite impressive. He has been here since the 1980’s and has never see anything like this before. Valdosta has been pretty blessed and it was nice to see people in our community come together.

Councilwoman Tooley stated that Hurricane Helene showed a lot. The first one we had was a test and with the second one, the City, citizens, and Department Heads worked together. She heard a lot of positive input from the citizens talking about how the City came and was working together. During Hurricane Idalia, there were certain needs that were not met but she did not hear that this this. Everybody was taken care of. Hurricane Helene brought the citizens, Department Heads, and Legislators together to build our community back.

Mayor Matheson stated that on November 8, 2024, a local Attorney in town has stepped up in a big way and gotten four bands to come play in Valdosta for a free, benefit concert at Unity Park. They will put up QR codes for a lot of the organizations that stepped up during Hurricane Helene. People can scan the QR codes and then donate money to various organizations.

Councilman Carroll stated that early voting has started and encouraged citizens to go vote.

Councilman Harden stated that everybody stepped up during Hurricane Helene and he thanked the Council for their support. There are a lot of services out there to help people so make sure you spread the word. There are still people out there who still need help. There are people who still need food. They did several meals this morning for people in the surrounding counties.

Councilwoman Miller-Code stated that she wanted to thank everyone for their help with the Levi Strauss 25th Year Anniversary celebration. They were one of the largest companies from the 1960’s to 1999 and they hired between 800 to 1,000 people. We have a lot of those employees who work with the City and County. On Saturday, October 26, 2024 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Unity Park, they will be hosting their 25th Year Anniversary for anyone who worked at Levi Strauss. They are also going to sing Happy Birthday to Jeanette Coody.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Matheson entertained a motion for adjournment.

A MOTION by Councilman Carroll, seconded by Councilwoman Miller-Cody, was unanimously adopted (6-0) to adjourn the October 16, 2024 Special Called Meeting of the Valdosta City Council at 6:41 p.m. to meet again in Regular Session on Thursday, October 24, 2024.